

REMARKS

The applicants have carefully considered the restriction requirement contained in the Office action dated February 6, 2009. By way of this response, original claims 45-52, 55, 56, 59 and 66-71 have been cancelled without prejudice to their further prosecution. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims are in condition for allowance and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The Office action identified claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 9-11, 16-18, 20-29, 31-33, 37-39, 42, 45-52, 55, 56, 59-61, 63, 65-72, 74, 76, 78, 80-82, 95, 102 and 107-112 as being directed to two (2) inventions under PCT Rules 13.1 and 13.2. Specifically, the Office action required an election between claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 9-11, 16-18, 20-29, 31-33, 37-39, 42, 60, 61, 63, 65, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80-82, 95, 102 and 107-112 (Group I), and claims 45-52, 55, 56, 59 and 66-71 (Group II). Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.499, applicants hereby elect the invention of Group I for further examination. Claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 9-11, 16-18, 20-29, 31-33, 37-39, 42, 60, 61, 63, 65, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80-82, 95, 102 and 107-112 read on the elected invention. Additionally, the claims directed to the non-elected invention of Group II (claims 45-52, 55, 56, 59 and 66-71) have been cancelled without prejudice.

The written opinion previously issued by the USPTO as the International Searching Authority for the corresponding international patent application concluded that all pending claims meet the criteria of novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability. *Therefore, the USPTO has already concluded that all of the pending claims are patentable and, thus,*

this national stage application is entitled to out-of-order examination.

Prompt examination and allowance is, therefore, earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner is of the opinion that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number identified below.

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